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The Communication Skills Center Project (CSC) in Detroit, Michigan, a Title I project, provided remedial reading services to 2,845 educationally disadvantaged children (80 to 85 percent Negro) in grades 2 through 12 during 1966-67. The facilities included six communication skills centers, three serving elementary and junior high school students and three serving high school students; one reading development center, including a diagnostic reading clinic and a methods and materials development laboratory; and 14 supplementary CSC classrooms. The measurement of reading achievement gains was based on pretest and post-test results using various appropriate levels of the California Reading Test and the Stanford Reading Test. Social-psychological adjustment was also evaluated. Students were organized into very low, low, and normal categories according to aptitude test scores. The findings indicated that, in general, at all school levels pupils of low and very low scholastic aptitude made significant gains in reading achievement to justify their selection. Greater rates of comprehension gain than would be expected of normal achieving pupils were noted for all three aptitude levels for all age groups except for the very low aptitude elementary subgroup. References are indicated. (CM)

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TITLE I

COMMUNICATION SKILLS CENTER PROJECT
Detroit, Michigan

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4. Secondary Program in Compensatory Education

   Junior High Summer Institutes, New York City OE–37026
   Project R–3, San Jose, California OE–37040
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COMMUNICATION SKILLS CENTER PROJECT
DETROIT

One of a Series of

Successful Compensatory Education Programs

U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Robert H. Finch, Secretary

Office of Education
Peter P. Muirhead, Acting Commissioner

FOREWORD

This project report is part of an independent study of selected exemplary programs for the education of disadvantaged children completed by the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., under contract with the U.S. Office of Education.

The researchers report this project significantly improved the educational attainment of the disadvantaged children involved. Other communities, in reviewing the educational needs of the disadvantaged youngsters they serve, may wish to use this project as a model - adapting it to their specific requirements and resources.

Division of Compensatory Education
Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education

COMMUNICATION SKILLS CENTER PROJECT
IN DETROIT, MICHIGAN

Introduction

Remedial reading services were provided to educationally disadvantaged children during 1966-67 at six Communication Skills Centers (CSC), three serving elementary and junior high school students, and three serving high school students. In addition, one special reading development center and 14 supplementary CSC classrooms were established. Students attended remedial reading classes on a weekly schedule during the regular school year, and intensive daily classes during the summer.

There were 2,845 children enrolled in grades 2 through 12, composed of 80-85 percent Negro, 10-15 percent Caucasian, and 1 percent or less Spanish-speaking. Pupils were selected to attend the CSC on the basis of referrals obtained from teacher or principals at project feeder schools.

Pupils enrolled in the CSC classes were given standardized reading achievement tests at the beginning and end of the treatment periods. The tests measured word meaning and paragraph meaning for grades 3 through 9 and reading comprehension for grades 10, 11, and 12. Means of gains in reading achievement made by CSC pupils were substantial for grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12. Other grades showed slight improvement in their reading scores over the treatment periods.

Personnel

A. Project Director/Consultant. (Part-time; administrator of programs for city public school district.)

Responsible for project design and administration and for preparation of classroom instructional techniques and materials.

B. Staff at each of six regular centers. Each is full-time except as noted.

1 junior administrative assistant
6 remedial reading teachers
1 reading diagnostician

1 psychologist (half-time)
1 social therapist
1 clerk-typist
1 lay aide

Methodology: General

Six regular Communication Skills Centers were operated during the 1966-67 school year. In addition to these centers, supplementary CSC classrooms were held in 14 schools, and a special reading development center was operated.

The six regular centers served 2,053 pupils from 60 public schools and 362 pupils from 26 non-public schools. Supplementary classrooms served another 430 pupils.

In each of three regions, an elementary center served elementary and some junior high school pupils, and a high school center served other junior, and all senior high school pupils. The three elementary centers were housed in specially outfitted transportable trailers on the school grounds of three elementary schools, one in each district. The high school center in one region was housed in classrooms at two high schools. In a second region, the high school center was operated in transportable trailers, and in the third region, in classrooms located in a high school.

Elementary and junior high school pupils were transported to and from the centers in buses specially provided by the project. Senior high pupils walked to the high school at which their center was located.

During the regular school year pupils served at the elementary centers attended two 60-minute classes per week. Pupils enrolled at the high school centers attended four 45-minute sessions per week. During the summer session most pupils attended one 60-minute class per day, 5 days per week.

Remedial reading therapy at the CSC centers began with diagnoses of the pupils' reading deficiencies. Following this, pupils were placed in small classes (six to ten pupils per class) for instruction. Using a variety of specialized remedial reading materials and equipment, CSC teachers strove to individualize instruction to meet each pupil's needs. Children whose reading disabilities appeared to be related to underlying problems of personal or social maladjustment were referred to the social therapist or to the psychologist for further diagnosis and counseling.

During the school year 1966-67, supplementary CSC classroom units began providing remedial reading services at 11 elementary schools and at three junior high schools. Each of these units was staffed by one teacher and served only pupils attending the school where it was located.

The CSC Reading Development Center became operational in February 1967. This center, housed in the Stevenson Building, consisted of a diagnostic reading clinic, a methods and materials development laboratory, and classroom facilities for small group (two or three pupils) instruction. The staff of the Reading Development Center included a full-time reading diagnostician and one full-time reading consultant. The psychologists and social therapists from the regular CSC centers assisted in the diagnostic clinic on a part-time basis. The function of the diagnostic reading clinic was to carry out thorough diagnoses of the reading disabilities of a limited number of pupils referred from selected schools, and to report findings and recommendations for treatment to the schools. The functions of the methods and materials laboratory were to develop and evaluate new materials and methods for use throughout the CSC program, to serve as a resource center for CSC personnel, and to plan and conduct inservice education workshops for CSC personnel. The small group instruction program provided opportunities for inservice training for new CSC teachers and for testing new materials and methods.

Counseling sessions were provided by the social therapist or the psychologist for those students whose reading disabilities were determined to be related to underlying problems of personal or social maladjustment. During the regular school year, approximately 300 CSC pupils attended one or more individual counseling sessions at the centers.

Methodology: Specific

A. Weekly Schedule for Workshop Participants

Weekly schedules were dittoed and passed to personnel at each center. This schedule was comprised of daily activities and assignments of personnel as participants in the program. A typical schedule is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

A TYPICAL WEEKLY SCHEDULE IN THE
COMMUNICATION SKILLS CENTER, DETROIT

Schedule for Workshop Participants

Day & Time	Activity	Parties Responsible
Second Week		
Monday		
8:30 - 9:00	Staff Consultation	
9:00 - 12:30	Classroom Participation	Consultant
12:30 - 1:30	Consultant Conference	Consultant
Tuesday		
8:30 - 9:00	Staff Consultation	
9:00 - 12:30	Classroom Participation	Consultant
12:30 - 1:30	Conference	Soc. Therapist
Wednesday		
8:30 - 9:00	Staff Consultation	
9:00 - 12:00	Classroom Participation	Consultant
12:00 - 1:30	Materials Demonstration	Consultant
Thursday		
8:30 - 9:00	Staff Consultation	
9:00 - 12:30	Classroom Participation	Consultant
12:30 - 1:30	Conference	Psychologist
Friday		
8:30 - 9:00	Staff Consultation	
9:00 - 12:30	Classroom Participation	Consultant
12:00 - 1:30	Conference	Diagnostician

B. Individual Instructional Diagnosis

Individual instructional diagnosis for each pupil was performed. A form was devised which provided for the collection of the pupil's biographical data, test scores administered, current instruction being given, recommendations by the social therapist, reading diagnostician,

or psychologist if obtained, and recommendations for remediation of each pupil's reading achievement. Their recommendations were based on the diagnosis performed and recorded on this form, and provided the basis for each pupil's special remedial treatment in the CSC centers.

C. Student Report

A form entitled "Student Report" was designed to provide the CSC instructors an evaluation of the progress of each pupil at periodic intervals. The form included items to be checked where difficulties were diagnosed. These items were:

Word Recognition

1. Letter recognition
2. Basic sight words
3. Reversals
4. Phonic analysis
   - Single consonants
   - Consonant blends
   - Diagraphs
   - Long vowels
   - Short vowels
   - Vowel combinations
5. Structural analysis
   - Compound words
   - Root words
   - Prefixes - suffixes
   - Contractions
   - Syllabication
   - Accent
6. Context clues

Social-Psychological Adjustment

Attitudes toward: (good, fair, or poor)

1. Self
2. Learning to read
3. School
4. Home
5. Peers
6. Other - specify

Comprehension

1. Word-sentence meaning
2. Main idea
3. Details
4. Sequence
5. Inferences
6. Following directions
7. Reference skills

Communication Skills

1. Oral expressions
2. Written expressions
3. Listening skills

Physical Factors

Vision_____ Hearing_____ Speech_____
(X - if defective; C - under correction)

Referred to:
Psychologist
Social Therapist
Reading Diagnostician

After checking the areas of difficulty for each pupil, comments and statement of progress were made by the evaluator.

D. Student Referral

A student referral form was completed for each pupil to be considered for CSC treatment. This form was used as the initial basis for planning remedial instruction for each pupil. The form contained: biographical data; scholastic aptitude and achievement test scores health survey on vision and hearing; attendance record; disciplinary contacts, if any; referrals from speech therapists, psychological clinics, school social workers, or other agencies; and family data.

Evaluation

A. Measures of Achievement

The evaluators reported that (Rankin, 1968):

> The measurement of gains in reading achievement made by pupils attending CSC classes was based on the results

of pretests and posttests. All CSC pupils were pretested at the time of their enrollment at a project center. Posttests were administered at the end of the first semester and at the end of the second semester of the school year 1966-67. Third grade pupils were pretested and posttested on the California Reading Test, Upper Primary level; pupils in grades four to six, on the Stanford Reading Test, Intermediate I level; junior high school pupils, on the Stanford Reading Test, Intermediate II level; and senior high school pupils on the Stanford Reading Test, Intermediate II or Advanced levels.

The analysis of reading achievement gains presented below is based on test results for pupils who attended classes at the regular CSC centers during the regular school year, 1966-67.

For comparison purposes, norms of the former reading progress of the pupils in the program were established by taking the pretest score for each grade and assuming that the difference between this score and a value of 1.0 for the same pupils when they were starting first grade, divided by the number of years of schooling, gives the average rate of gain. Thus, a fourth-grade pupil starting the year and scoring 3.0 on pretest, was assumed to have gained 2.0 years of reading age in 3.0 years of schooling, an average gain of about 7 reading months per year.

In Table 2 average gains in months per year are shown for grades four through six, and for the junior and senior high school groups, before and during the program.

These results showed considerable benefits for the upper grades, although no tests of significance were quoted.

Table 2

AVERAGE GAINS FOR GRADES 4-6, 7-8,
AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, BEFORE AND DURING
THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS CENTER PROGRAM, 1966-67

	N	Average Gains in Months per Year	
		Before	During
Grades 4-6	185		
Word Meaning		6	4
Paragraph Meaning		5	9
Grades 7-8	42		
Word Meaning		7	11
Paragraph Meaning		7	12
Senior High School	113		
Paragraph Meaning		5	15

[Based on tables in Rankin (1968)]

B. Other Evaluation Indices

1. An analysis of the relationship between reading achievement gains and scholastic aptitude levels was done in order to determine the effectiveness of CSC treatment for pupils at different aptitude levels. To facilitate this analysis, the 1,404 CSC pupils for whom data were available were stratified by scholastic aptitude according to their most recent scores on one of the standardized tests of scholastic aptitude administered to all Detroit school children on a regular basis. The distribution of these CSC pupils on a stanine places 43 pupils below average (stanine 1-3), 56 pupils at average (stanine 4-6), one pupil above average (stanine 7), and no pupils at higher stanines (8 and 9). This distribution of scores in the range of stanines 1 through 6 indicates that the CSC pupils are markedly below the norms.

The data collected during the CSC program were organized in categories of "Very Low" for pupils whose aptitude test scores fell in stanines 1 and 2, "Low" for pupils whose aptitude test scores fell in stanine 3, and "Normal" for pupils whose aptitude test scores fell in stanine 4, 5, or 6.

The evidence revealed that (Rankin, 1968):

Among elementary school pupils enrolled in CSC classes for one semester, the pupils in the "Very Low" aptitude group showed greater rates of gain in reading achievement than did those in the "Low" and "Normal" aptitude groups. In the case of elementary pupils enrolled in CSC classes for two semesters, rates of gain in reading achievement were correlated with aptitude levels. The "Very Low" aptitude pupils made no gain in vocabulary achievement and less than expected gains in comprehension achievement. Both "Low" and "Normal" aptitude pupils showed lower rates of gain in vocabulary achievement than would be expected on the basis of their pretest scores, but greater rates of gain in comprehension than would be expected.

Junior high pupils' rates of gain in reading achievement were roughly correlated with their aptitude levels. In vocabulary achievement the "Very Low" aptitude pupils showed only slightly greater rates of gain than would be expected on the basis of their pretest scores, while both "Low" and "Normal" aptitude pupils showed definitely greater rates of gain than would be expected. With respect to comprehension achievement, pupils at all three aptitude levels attained greater rates of gain than would be expected of normal-achieving pupils.

Among senior high pupils, those in the "Normal" aptitude groups made considerably greater rates of gain in reading achievement than did those in either the "Very Low" or "Low" aptitude groups. However, pupils at all three aptitude levels showed greater rates of gain than would be expected of normal-achieving pupils.

The findings appear to indicate that, in general, at all school levels, pupils of "Low" and "Very Low" scholastic aptitude make sufficient gains in reading achievement to justify their selection for CSC treatment. The available evidence does give reason to question the value of two semesters' continuous treatment for elementary school pupils having very low or low aptitudes. However, in view of the smallness of the number of these pupils, further investigation is needed before any firm conclusion can be drawn.

2. The change in pupils' attitudes, behaviors, and achievements in their regular school classrooms due to the CSC participation was determined by the administration of a questionnaire to the regular classroom teachers. The overall conclusion was that, in the opinions of their regular classroom teachers, the majority of 144 randomly selected CSC pupils showed noticeable signs of improvements in attitudes and behavior in their regular school classrooms.

C. Modifications and Suggestions

1. More attention should be placed on remedial instruction for those elementary pupils who are behind the averages of their own culturally disadvantaged group. Although this program treated pupils who were deficient in their reading skills, even among these pupils there were children who needed remedial reading instruction more intensive than that given the rest of the group. In future CSC programs, the increase in special remedial instruction over that given in the 1966-67 CSC program would bring up the lowest performers to a level such that the achievement of the entire disadvantaged group would average above that for normally achieving pupils.

2. In questionnaires to regular classroom teachers of CSC pupils, expression was repeatedly voiced that closer communication between CSC personnel and feeder school teachers should occur. The most important aspect of this communication would be the feedback to the classroom teachers concerning pupils' reading deficiencies and the integration of special kinds of remedial reading help into the regular school classroom activities.

Budget

1	Project Director/Consultant	Half-time
6	Junior Administrative Assistants	Full-time
36	Remedial Reading Teachers	Full-time
6	Reading Diagnosticians	Full-time
6	Psychologists	Half-time
6	Social Therapists	Full-time
6	Clerk-typist	Full-time
6	Lay aide	Full-time

Materials (Description and costs unavailable.)

Per pupil costs for the entire project in the 1966-67 school year covering 60 public schools and 26 non-public schools is estimated at $264 per pupil. This estimate is based on budget proposal costs and not on final actual costs which were not available at this time.

Quoted Sources

*Rankin, P. T., Jr. Evaluation of the Communications Skills Center Project. Detroit: Detroit Public Schools, Research and Development Department, January 1968.

For More Information

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* The Office of Education is collecting this material for placement in the ERIC system. Items may be obtained either in microfiche or hard copy.